



State of South Carolina
Office of the Lieutenant Governor

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**LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR BAUER ACCEPTS
\$1 MILLION FOR RURAL HEALTHCARE NEEDS**

(Columbia) - South Carolina Lieutenant Governor Andre Bauer, head of the state's Office on Aging, formally accepted two checks today worth a total of \$1 million. The checks, each written for \$500,000, came from two sources: the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the US Department of Agriculture.

The \$1 million will be used as seed capital by the South Carolina Office of Rural Health to provide up to \$28 million in loans for new or renovated facilities, updated and modernized equipment, and jobs in South Carolina's rural communities.

"Our state is fortunate to be able to receive these funds," said Lt. Governor Bauer. "When you look at the history of South Carolina's rural areas, you often see that there was a disconnect between the cities and small towns, especially when it comes to healthcare. Some folks have to drive a long way just to wait to see a doctor. Others don't even go because they don't see an immediate need. Today's leading killer is chronic disease, not acute illness, and it is my hope that the money we received today can further not only day-to-day medical needs but also continue to educate rural residents on how to better take care of themselves and their families."

South Carolina ranks 13th in the nation in terms of highest percentage of rural population. Four out of every 10 people in SC live in rural areas, including 200,000 seniors. "That's why the work of the South Carolina Office of Rural Health is so important as it works to assist in improving the quality of healthcare in rural, medically underserved areas of South Carolina," Lt. Governor Bauer said. "Rural South Carolina needs doctors."

People age 65 and older make up 13% of the US population, yet they account for one-third of all prescriptions, half of all physician visits and half of all hospital stays. In South Carolina that translates into more than \$5 billion in expenditures: \$1 billion from Medicaid, \$3.5 billion from Medicare, and \$1 billion in state health plan expenses for retired state employees.

“We expect close to 10,000 South Carolinians to turn 65 in 2005, which means every working day 36 new Medicare beneficiaries will be looking to doctors for the new comprehensive Medicare physicals that begin in 2005. Fourteen of those new South Carolina Medicare beneficiaries will live in rural areas,” he said.

The Lieutenant Governor’s office assumed direction of the State Bureau of Senior Services in July, renaming it the Lieutenant Governor’s Office on Aging. This move gives South Carolina seniors a prominent voice in government and allows for more accountability in the office.